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Viewing cable 09QUITO885, Engaging Civilian Leadership to Improve Mil to Mil Relations

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- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09QUITO885	2009-10-15 20:53	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Quito

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.eluniverso.com/2011/04/14/1/1355/cable-229888.html>

VZCZCXYZ0031
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHQT #0885/01 2882053
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O R 152053Z OCT 09
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0195
INFO RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RHMFISS/COGARD INTELCOORDCEN WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/SECNAV WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/USSOUTHAF DAVIS MONTHAN AFB AZ
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0045
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0065
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ NOV LIMA 0071
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 000885

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/10/15

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [PARM](#) [PTER](#) [KHDP](#) [EC](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: Engaging Civilian Leadership to Improve Mil to Mil Relations

REF: QUITO 829; QUITO 708; QUITO 616

CLASSIFIED B...

id: 229888
date: 10/15/2009 20:53
refid: 09QUITO885
origin: Embassy Quito
classification: CONFIDENTIAL
destination: 09QUITO616|09QUITO708|09QUITO829
header:
VZCZCXYZ0031
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHQT #0885/01 2882053
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O R 152053Z OCT 09
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0195
INFO RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RHMFISS/COGARD INTELCOORDCEN WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
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RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ NOV LIMA 0071
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

----- header ends -----

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 000885

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/10/15
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [PARM](#) [PTER](#) [KHDP](#) [EC](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: Engaging Civilian Leadership to Improve Mil to Mil Relations

REF: QUITO 829; QUITO 708; QUITO 616

CLASSIFIED BY: Heather Hodges, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(A), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: The Embassy is receiving mixed signals regarding the Ecuadorian military's willingness to continue historically strong cooperation. Likely causes are: instructions by civilian leadership to lessen dependency on the U.S.; a lack of information and communication within the Ecuadorian military; political posturing; and fewer financial resources. Engaging the military's civilian leadership, even when the Ecuadorian uniformed military attempts to keep issues within their own channels, will need to be a central part of the Embassy's strategy to improve military cooperation. End Summary.

Military to Military Relations Skittish

¶2. (C) The Ecuadorian military has recently displayed skittish behavior toward engagement with the U.S. military, expressing apparently earnest requests for cooperation in certain sectors, while rejecting cooperation in other areas. An example of the former would be the numerous requests the Joint Command of the Ecuadorian Armed Forces has sent for assistance in the destruction of munitions and arms (Ref B), and its hosting of a delegation from Washington to perform an assessment of the GOE's munitions, weapons and storage bunkers. The Joint Command requested that the U.S. not only destroy the munitions, but also train its personnel and assist in paying for upgrades to its facilities. The Ecuadorian Army's northern border units have maintained good working relations with

the Embassy for the past two years, most recently in the development of riverine capacity and training.

¶3. (C) In contrast, despite over ten years and approximately \$4 million in support for a TPS-70 radar in Ecuador's northern border region, Ecuadorian Air Force (FAE) Commander Brigadier General Rodrigo Bohorquez refused to allow U.S. Air Force technicians access to make repairs on the radar in August, 2009. Bohorquez subsequently sent an official memorandum complaining that the USG failed to provide operational and maintenance support for the radar, even though a 1998 U.S.-Ecuadorian bilateral agreement clearly stated that the GOE was responsible for the operations and maintenance of the radar. (Note: Due to the above, and the lack of commitment to the radar by the GOE, U.S. Southern Command has discontinued USG support of the radar. End Note.)

¶4. (C) Throughout the transition of the Forward Operating Location (FOL) at Manta, the Ecuadorian Air Force (FAE) was very cooperative. However, it is likely that the Ministry of Defense and other civilian leadership gave instructions to the FAE to keep quiet about any positives from the ten-year relationship with the U.S. at the FOL. Instead, civilian leaders and a parliamentary committee sought to smear the U.S. presence and contributions. The GOE did not attend the July 17 FOL "last flight" tribute ceremony (Ref C), and did not invite the Embassy to attend a last minute ceremony marking the transfer of the FOL to Ecuador on September 18 (Ref A).

¶5. (C) In the same schizophrenic vein, Navy Commander Admiral Aland Molestina asked the Embassy's Naval Attache to initiate a request to formalize information sharing between the Ecuadorian Navy and USG, with the ostensible justification that this would ensure onward cooperation if the commander were replaced in the near future. We understand that the real reason for the request is Molestina's fear that his informal cooperation with the U.S. on narcotics trafficking leaves him exposed to political and legal attack, as happened in February against police units cooperating

with the USG. (Note: The Embassy MilGrp is working with U.S. Southern Command to review the potential impact such an initiative may have on our bilateral cooperation, and counternarcotics information sharing between Ecuador and the Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF) South. End Note.)

Increasing Civilian Leadership (and Control)

¶6. (C) The Correa government has placed an increasing number of political appointees in the Ministry of Defense so as to establish civilian control over the Armed Forces. Perhaps the biggest change in leadership occurred on January 2009 with the appointment of Vice Minister of Defense Miguel Carvajal to the position of Coordinating Minister of External and External Security. Several uniformed military have noted to us that initiatives were harder to get approved after Carvajal's appointment, not just because of an additional layer of approval, but mostly because of Carvajal's leftist ideological leanings. Initial concerns and uncertainty among senior military officers regarding promotions and assignments have calmed, especially after the August 10 presidential inauguration. However, senior officers are still adjusting to the increasing level of control exerted by the civilian leadership.

Why the Mixed Message?

¶7. (C) The conflicting messages regarding the Ecuadorian

military's willingness to pursue cooperation with the U.S. are likely the result of several factors:

-- Directives from civilian leadership to lessen dependency on the U.S. Defense Minister Ponce said during his April 2008 inauguration that the MOD would review all cooperation with the USG to determine what cooperation could be directed elsewhere, and has repeated this mantra since.

-- Lack of information. The Ecuadorian military and civilian leadership often do not share information, and have limited trust in each other. The military and its leadership are often also unaware of the overall bilateral relationship the U.S. shares with Ecuador, even in terms of security cooperation.

-- Political posturing/survival. Now that it is clear that Correa has staying power, military leaders know their options are either to visibly cooperate with their civilian leaders, or lose their careers.

-- Financial crunch. The GOE has turned to China, Russia and other countries prepared to offer financing or barter payment to fund the purchase of weapons and/or equipment.

Forward Strategy

18. (C) While mixed signals make cooperation more challenging, the Embassy has developed a strategy to remain engaged with the Ecuadorian military. Using the experience of our renewed cooperation with the Ecuadorian National Police, we will allow

pressure to build from within the Ecuadorian military on the GOE political leadership for the broad, quality-based assistance only the USG provides. This strategy will be implemented as follows:

-- Embassy will require that requests for assistance by Ecuadorian military counterparts will need to be in writing, and when appropriate, channeled through the Ministry of Defense.

-- Cooperation will be reviewed to determine the degree of U.S. benefit in the proposal, and whether the Ecuadorian military is using assistance effectively and as originally agreed. Absent high marks under these criteria, that cooperation may be discontinued or the GOE's request for assistance denied. For example, as described above, assistance for the TPS-70 radar was cut. Due to a lack of access to the Ecuadorian military's northern border units, the Military Group relocated its counter drug Joint Planning Assistance Team officer from Coca to Ibarra.

-- Areas of cooperation that are very much in the USG interest that we will want to continue include the following: renewing the exchange of diplomatic notes to provide protections for TDY military personnel in Ecuador; a Section 1033 Memorandum of Understanding to allow assistance to the military's counternarcotics efforts along Ecuador's northern border; and cooperation in the destruction of missiles and munitions as well as humanitarian demining.

¶9. (C) At the same time, the Embassy will take the following steps to improve military to military relations, and protect longer term access:

-- The Embassy Country Team will increase engagement with the military's civilian leadership to attempt to increase the comfort level of civilians in working with the USG. The Embassy will begin by providing information via meetings and briefings on our bilateral cooperation, in security, development and other areas.

-- The Embassy intends to use visits, both Ecuadorian civilian and military leaders to the U.S., as well as U.S. civilian and military leaders to Ecuador, to discuss security cooperation.

-- The Embassy will pursue civilian-military seminars, as well as short-term training opportunities in areas of interest to the Ecuadorian military, such as weapons and munitions handling, humanitarian demining, etc.

-- The Embassy will also propose funding under Section 1207 to assist the Ecuadorian security forces to secure Ecuador's northern border region and to promote civilian leadership of the military and police, and to improve GOE interagency coordination.

¶10. (C) Note: These strategies and initiatives to regain full cooperation with the Ecuadorian military may prove more difficult than with the Ecuadorian National Police, since DefMin Ponce seems more inclined to follow Security Minister Miguel Carvajal's lead, and is less likely to stand up for the military's interests. End Note.

Comment

¶11. (C) Maintaining positive military-to-military relations is important to achieving USG objectives in Ecuador. Our historically good relations have provided excellent counternarcotics and counterterrorism information, and operational access. Moreover, some leaders within the Ecuadorian military are sincerely focused on improving the military's ability to combat narco-trafficking and to repel the encroachment of illegal armed groups such as the FARC into Ecuador. Working with the civilian leadership of the military, even when the Ecuadorian uniformed military attempts to keep issues within their own channels, will need to be an integral part of the USG's engagement strategy in Ecuador.
HODGES

=====CABLE ENDS=====